

How GAO Findings Are Addressed by the Coburn/Weldon Ryan White CARE Act Amendments of 2006

In 2003, Congress requested that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) evaluate the distribution of federal funds under the Ryan White CARE Act and Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) programs to determine how to more equitably distribute funds to ensure all Americans living with HIV/AIDS are guaranteed access to comparable services and medical care. The GAO findings are available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06332.pdf>.

GAO found that “multiple provisions in the CARE Act and HOPWA grant funding formulas result in funding not being distributed according to the current distribution of the disease” (page 14). The Ryan White CARE Act Amendments of 2006 responds to all of the GAO findings.

The GAO noted “incorporating HIV data along with AIDS data would result in targeting funds more accurately according to need” for both CARE Act and HOPWA programs (page 3). GAO concluded that “the inclusion of HIV cases in the CARE Act funding formulas by fiscal year 2007 could eventually improve the targeting of funding to needy individuals with HIV disease” (page 63-64). The bill requires that CARE Act formulas be based upon living HIV/AIDS cases beginning in fiscal year 2007. GAO suggested that “if Congress wishes HOPWA funding to more closely reflect the distribution of persons living with AIDS, it should change the program so that HOPWA formula grant eligibility, including for bonus grants, and base grant funding allocations are based on a measure of living AIDS cases (page 64). The bill requires that HOPWA funding now be based upon living cases of HIV/AIDS.

According to GAO, HIV “case reporting systems need several years to become fully operational” (page 46), noting that the Institute of Medicine “has reported that it could take from 18 months to several years after the implementation of a HIV reporting system before there would be valid estimates of the number of people living with HIV” (page 62). The bill allows those states that have recently enacted an HIV reporting system to utilize estimates of HIV prevalence determined by the CDC for the next two fiscal years until their reporting systems have matured.

GAO found that “some CARE Act grants and HOPWA base funding are based on case counts that include deceased cases” (page 15). GAO notes “under current law, San Francisco’s Title I base grant is determined in part by the number of deceased cases in the San Francisco EMA as of 1995” (page 35). The bill eliminates funding for deceased AIDS cases and requires all funding for both programs to be based upon the number of patients living with HIV/AIDS within a jurisdiction.